

University of Toronto
ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Boyd Neel, Dean

Special Events Series
1960-1961

Conservatory Concert Hall at 8:30 p.m.
135 College Street, Toronto, Ontario

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 1961

Fine Arts Quartet

LEONARD SORKIN, Violin

IRVING ILMER, Viola

ABRAM LOFT, Violin

GEORGE SOPKIN, Cello

QUARTET IN G MAJOR, OPUS 77, No. 1

Haydn

Allegro moderato

Adagio

Menuetto: Presto

Finale: Presto

Save for the unfinished Opus 103, these are the last quartets written by Haydn. Though they contain much amazing music, they are scarcely ever heard, possibly because they have no identifying tags or legends. The treatment of ideas in the first movement is thoroughly symphonic, and in several places almost orchestral. The opening march-like motif gives an impression of flippancy, but the grim undertone is inescapable, especially when it emerges in a series of furious sforzandi in the working out of the material. In the adagio Haydn develops a breadth and weight of melodic statement that recalls again how much Beethoven owed to his example. Another stride forward is to be observed in the trio of the minuet where the conventional repeats are abandoned and the repetition written out with several integral changes in the use of the material. In the finale Haydn outstrips himself in the vigour and ingenuity of the writing and the technical demands on the players.

QUARTET No. 1 (first Toronto performance)

Julian Orbón

Poco allegro, non troppo quasi moderato

Molto allegro

Lento, mesto

Allegro

Julian Orbón was born in Cuba in 1925 and began his early studies with his father. Although his string quartet had been in existence some five years, Orbón did not achieve international recognition until 1955 when he entered his "Three Symphonic Versions" in a Festival of Contemporary Music of Latin American Composers held in Caracas, Venezuela. This work won him a \$5,000 prize, but, more important, brought the young composer's talents to the attention of the music world. Shortly thereafter, in March 1955, the United States première of Orbón's string quartet took place at Columbia University's Composer's Forum in New York City. The reaction of audience and critics alike was immediate and positive in its enthusiasm. In 1959, the Fine Arts Quartet premiered Orbón's string quartet in Chicago at the Ravinia Festival. Roger Dettmer wrote in the Chicago American: "Here is music of great seeking, integrated, forceful, of harmonic vitality and rhythmic virility. The basic elements are hot-sauced folk music and sombre, prayerful litanies, not imitative but transfigured by a young composer who is, on the basis of this work and his gorgeous "Danzas Fantásticas", the white hope of Latin American music."

- INTERMISSION -

QUARTET IN C SHARP MINOR, OPUS 131 Beethoven

Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo. Allegro molto vivace.

Allegro moderato. Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile.

Presto. Adagio quasi un poco andante. Allegro.

There are, in the literature of music, a few limited works whose character may only be defined as super-earthly. Extensive study and repeated hearings increase the listener's understanding of them, but the sheer mystery of the process by which they came into existence remains unfathomable. It is hardly necessary to rehearse the events of 1825 and 1826 which preceded and surrounded the composition of the C sharp minor quartet. Beethoven's deafness had by now shut him off completely not only from ordinary human relationships, but — greater deprivation! — also from the sound of music. The difficulties with his amazing nephew attained new and more incredible climaxes. Nevertheless, Beethoven had plans (in mind, if not in hand) for an opera, an oratorio, a requiem, a tenth symphony — and for more chamber music. He lived long enough to achieve only the last of these objectives, and that but partially. Despite the innovations of technique and expression which characterize this quartet, by the measure of Beethoven's usual procedure, it was written in an astonishingly short time. The theme of the introductory fugue was first noted down in December, 1825; and Thayer believes that a "goodly portion" of the quartet was completed during the next month. Beethoven aroused the apprehension of his publishers by writing on the copy he sent them, "Put together from pilferings from one thing and another." He had later to reassure them that this inscription was merely an Olympian pleasantry. It is singularly appropriate that Beethoven's last known action, two days before his death, was the signing of his name to a letter granting the rights of this work to the publishers, Schott and Sons.

Beethoven's extension of the quartet's formal boundaries was carried in this work to its utmost. Rather than the customary four or the usual five movements, the score is written in seven divisions, to be played without interruption. The opening fugue, whose meditative theme is heard from the four instruments successively, is marked by chromaticism suggestive of certain sections of Bach's "Kunst der Fuge". The climax is reached when the 'cello takes up the motive, in augmentation, against its original form in the first violin, while the second violin and viola extol Beethoven's ingenuity by pursuing an earlier counterpoint. A flowing line extending over eight bars comprises the thematic material for the second movement, which is best described as a free fantasy. The allegro moderato that follows is a mere transition (eleven bars in all) to the succeeding movement. It is, nevertheless, separately numbered by the composer. Next comes the theme and seven variations. The thematic sentence is unusually long, covering thirty-two measures; and most of the variations, despite the freedom with which they are written, conform to this length also. The display of musical recourse and imagination are equal to anything in the long list of Beethoven's greatest creations. A scherzo in five sections follows, the most complex yet highly organized of all Beethoven's movements in this form. His desire for more colour than the strings ordinarily yield is emphasized by the direction that the last statement of the theme be played *sul ponticello* (over the bridge). The sixth movement offers a brief respite, in which the composer gathers strength for the onslaught of the last section, a movement of extraordinary vigour and fertility. The large outline of the form is that of the sonata allegro (exposition, development, recapitulation, coda) but the succession of the themes and their treatment is more akin to an extended rondo.

Royal Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, Harman Haakman conductor, Convocation Hall, February 6 at 8:30 p.m. For invitations apply to Box Office.

Change of Date: The date of Russell Oberlin's recital has been changed from February 20 to March 9. Tickets for February 20 will be honoured on the new date.

SPECIAL EVENTS SERIES

1960 - 61

MAUREEN FORRESTER, contralto

October 26, 1960

FREDERICK GRINKE, violinist and

KATHLEEN LONG, pianist

November 3, 1960

FRIEDRICH GULDA, pianist with the VIENNA

PHILHARMONIC WIND ENSEMBLE

November 24, 1960

MARCEL GRANDJANY, harpist

December 8, 1960

FINE ARTS STRING QUARTET

January 26, 27, 28, 1961

RUSSELL OBERLIN, counter-tenor

February 20, 1961

Tickets on sale for all concerts at the Box Office during intermission and at the Conservatory Concert Bureau, Room 77, 9:00 - 5:00 p.m., Mondays through

Fridays. Telephone EM. 8-2655.

Series Manager — Ezra Schabas

About the Artists

Leonard Sorkin, first violinist, studied at the American Conservatory, the Chicago Musical College, and with Mischa Mischakoff. He is a former member of the Saidenberg Symphonette and the Chicago Symphony, and was concertmaster of the American Broadcasting Company Orchestra in Chicago. Mr. Sorkin plays a 1729 Stradivarius.

Abram Loft, second violinist, studied with Herbert Dittler in New York. He holds a Ph.D. in musicology from Columbia University and was formerly Assistant Professor of Music there. He has also been on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music, served as Reviews Editor and member of the executive council of the Journal of the American Musicological Society, and on the board of the U.S. section of the International Society for Contemporary Music. Mr. Loft plays a 1772 Balestrieri.

Irving Ilmer, violist, studied at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and with various prominent teachers. He was concertmaster of the San Antonio Symphony, a member of the Chicago Symphony, and violist in the All-American Youth Orchestra when it toured America with Leopold Stokowski. Mr. Ilmer plays a 1560 Gaspar Da Salo.

George Sopkin, cellist, studied with Daniel Saidenberg in Chicago and with Emanuel Feuermann in Switzerland. Mr. Sopkin is an alumnus of the Chicago Symphony and was cellist with the Pro Arte Quartet. He was Associate Professor of Music at the University of Wisconsin before joining the air force during World War II. After his discharge, he and Leonard Sorkin organized the Fine Arts Quartet. Mr. Sopkin plays a 1726 Gofriller.